

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 5, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our concern regarding the growing influence of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly regarding its efforts to extort concessions from countries desperate for vaccines to combat COVID-19. Once all Americans have been afforded ample opportunity to be vaccinated, we must work to ensure that our allies and neighbors also have access to these life-saving vaccines from reliable sources. Accordingly, we request, within all applicable rules and regulations, that your administration work with democratic allies to allay the PRC's influence and assist our Western Hemisphere neighbors in winning the war against this vicious disease.

As the United States is making swift strides toward vaccinating Americans against COVID-19, we believe it is time to begin turning toward ending the scourge of this deadly disease in our hemisphere. Regrettably, the PRC is already using COVID-19 and its Sinovac and Sinopharm vaccines to pressure allies in our hemisphere. In fact, we are alarmed by the actions it reportedly is taking to leverage the deadly COVID-19 virus and its vaccine to compel countries to conform to its will. For example, the government of Paraguay, Taiwan's sole remaining ally in South America, stated in March that it had been approached by the PRC "with offers of Chinese-made vaccines in exchange for breaking ties with Taiwan." In the time since these reports, Taiwan worked with other nations, specifically India, to help obtain vaccines for Paraguay. However, the demand has not been fully met and there are still grave concerns regarding the PRC's pressure campaign in Paraguay.

This is particularly concerning because evidence from PRC COVID-related assistance globally suggests that such assistance rarely comes without policy changes expected in return. Earlier this year Guyana reversed course on an agreement made with Taiwan to establish a representative office in Guyana. Following this change, which was reportedly caused by pressure from Beijing, Guyana was offered 20,000 Chinese vaccine doses. In addition, El Salvador publicly thanked the PRC for promising a million Sinovac doses. Reportedly, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Peru have agreed to use the PRC's vaccines.

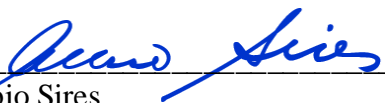
At the same time, Taiwan has provided more than 12 million masks, thousands of gowns and other personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as much-needed infrared thermometers, thermal imaging cameras, and ventilators to many countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Unlike the PRC, Taiwan has provided this crucial assistance with no strings attached.

The global vaccine distribution system has done little to alleviate the desperation felt by many countries in our hemisphere to combat COVID-19. In regard to Paraguay, for example, COVAX has shipped only 36,000 vaccine doses for a population of 7 million. Meanwhile, India has donated 200,000 of its COVAXIN vaccine to Paraguay. U.S. and European vaccines are largely unavailable, although the U.S. has a stockpile of AstraZeneca vaccines that are not approved for use within the U.S., of which, approximately 2.7 million doses have been promised to Mexico. We are encouraged by recent reports that your administration will begin sharing doses from this stockpile following a safety review, and once it is assured that all Americans who want a vaccine have been able to obtain one.

We are concerned that without concerted and expedient action from the United States and our European allies, the PRC will continue to pressure desperate countries in the Western Hemisphere with the promise of much-needed vaccines, to the detriment of U.S. interests in the region and those of its allies, such as Taiwan. It is unconscionable that the PRC is leveraging this deadly virus, which it unleashed on the world, and its vaccine to coerce other countries to conform to its foreign policy priorities. For these reasons, we urge you to work with Taiwan, our European allies, and the global vaccine distribution systems to ensure that Western Hemisphere countries are able to secure vaccines free of the PRC's notorious bullying tactics.


Thank you for your attention to this matter of utmost importance.

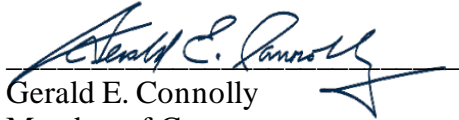
Sincerely,


Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress


Ami Bera
Member of Congress

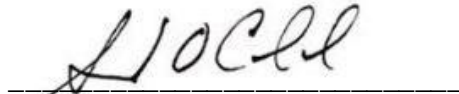

Liz Cheney
Member of Congress



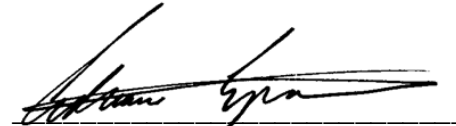
Gerald E. Connolly
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Steve Chabot
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Salud O. Carbajal
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Adriano Espaillat
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Brian Fitzpatrick
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Virginia Foxx
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John Garamendi
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Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress



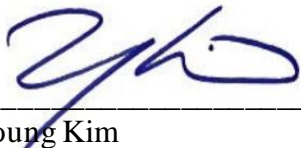
Jenniffer González-Colon
Member of Congress



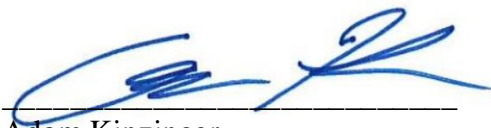
Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress



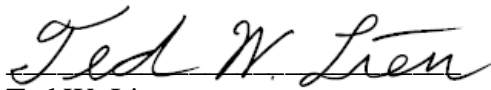
Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress



Young Kim
Member of Congress



Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



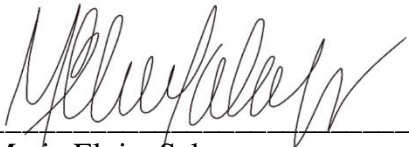
Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



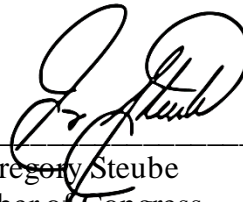
Guy Reschenthaler
Member of Congress



Jefferson Van Drew
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
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Dina Titus
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Norma J. Torres
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